GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Triple Jeopardy

This particular *Phantom* launched at 1753 in order to burn down excess fuel and build up night and simulated instrument time prior to a scheduled Mirror Landing Practice period commencing at 1830.

A TACAN penetration with GCA pickup was commenced at 1804 and the final controller assumed control at nine miles. At three miles, the aircraft was established on glide path and continued in to one-half mile at which time the controller instructed the pilot to take over visually. Continuous information was issued falsely indicating on glide path and course through the remainder of the approach.

The *Phantom* driver did not see the "meatball" prior to touchdown. Realizing he was about to land short, he selected "military power." The main gear contacted the over-run 49 feet short of the runway, struck an 18-inch mound of dirt and subsequently engaged a 24-inch-deep trench located five feet from the threshold. The port main landing gear strut failed at the trunnions and separated from the aircraft. The starboard main wheel failed at the axle assembly and rolled independently down the runway. Both trailing edge wing tips separated on impact. In spite of all this, the machine continued down the runway and became airborne.

A bewildered pilot saw sparks in his rear view mirror and realized that some damage had occurred. The LSO had just manned his station and was summarily requested to inspect the distressed driver's machine for a blown tire or other damage. Without benefit of an Aldis lamp, the LSO assessed the damage as a blown starboard tire and so informed the pilot.

It was decided to effect a short field arrestment. The secondary runway was chosen to preclude closing the main runway. The LSO

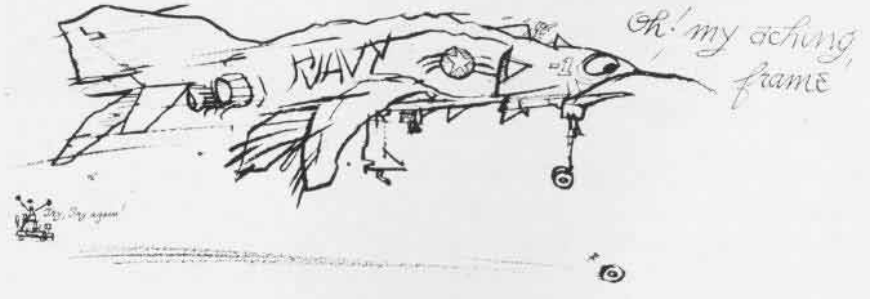
requested that a portable ARC-27 and truck be dispatched so that he could control the arrested landing. The truck sans ARC-27 arrived, but the tower assured the LSO that an ARC-27 was on its way.

During this interlude, the injured *Phantom* orbited the field. The hydraulic warning telelight came on but all three systems indicated normal pressure. The gear and flaps were blown down as a precautionary measure. Shortly thereafter the PC-1 hydraulic pressure failed. The pilot extended the ram air turbine (RAT). At about the same time, the ARC-27 arrived and the LSO called for a low pass to establish proper alignment on the off-duty runway. During this pass, Paddles did not observe an arresting hook and challenged the position of the gear. The driver replied, "All down and locked," and was subsequently advised by Paddles to make a normal approach with touchdown on centerline, 1,000 feet past the threshold.

The approach and attempted arrestment were normal and on touchdown the port engine was secured. Both cross deck pendants were severed as the aircraft slid over them. Seeing sparks and the left wing dragging on the runway, Paddles instructed the distraught driver to "stay on the deck." The pilot, however, aware that he was losing directional control and would be running off the runway, selected starboard afterburner and got it back in the air.

After restarting the port engine, the driver, while orbiting, discussed the prior evolution with Paddles. It was decided and confirmed by low passes that the port main mount was missing and that they would try it again on the duty runway after it had been foamed. (The tower, thinking ahead, alerted the Coast Guard to the situation and requested a helicopter be dispatched to the scene.)

The second attempted arrestment



ILLUSTRATED BY Osborn

was commenced with 1,000 pounds of fuel remaining. Touchdown was 3,000 feet short of the gear; consequently, the machine sliced through both cross deck pendants. Once again the pilot lit the burners and staggered back into the air. With 800 pounds remaining, a final approach in an attempt to engage the chain arresting gear met with complete failure as both pendants were severed by the ragged hulk. Nevertheless, he became airborne one more time and, with an extremely low fuel state, headed for the coast.

Climbing through 1,500 feet, the plane rolled violently to the right but was returned to level flight as its occupants prepared to abandon ship. The RIO punched out over the coast line and the pilot left it just off shore while the mangled *Phantom* took a nose dive out to sea.

The Coast Guard helo, luckily aware of this turn of events, followed the flight path, picked up both survivors in short order and returned them to base.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

Great balls of fire! Somebody coulda got kilt in this fiasco.

First thing these fellas did wrong was to get outa bed; after that it was all down hill. When you don't know what you got left underneath, you'd better darn sure find out and follow NATOPS. A lota grief coulda been avoided here if this youngster had taken over visually and GCA had really monitored the approach to touchdown.

Collective Prang

An SH-3A crew, consisting of pilot, copilot, crew chief and three passengers, manned their aircraft about 1000 on a bright clear day. They departed an East Coast air station for a local flight to work with the ground electronics crew to check the antenna patterns for the TACAN. The helo was to hover at an altitude of 50 feet a short distance southeast of the station for the initial portion of the flight. About the time the helo reached the predetermined position, the ground electronics crew informed the pilot that there would be a short delay before starting the antenna pattern checks.

Since there was a delay, the pilot asked his copilot if he would like to make a practice hover to utilize the time. The copilot began the approach at 200 feet with an airspeed of 60 knots. The copilot dissipated altitude and airspeed until approximately 100 feet above the water.

At this time, he allowed an excessive sink rate to develop and attempted a waveoff by lowering the nose. Owing to the proximity of the shoreline bluff straight ahead, he tried to stop his forward motion by raising the nose and began increasing collective to stop the rate of descent.

The pilot realized the situation was deteriorating and took control at about 50 feet. He momentarily decreased collective in an attempt to build up RPM but quickly abandoned this course of action by raising the collective to cushion the landing.

The aircraft hit some 25 yards off shore in water one to two feet deep. The touchdown was firm with the tail section hitting the water first. The crew chief retarded the throttle on touchdown, but the pilot called for full power and, with forward cyclic and collective, got the helo back in the air after being in the water only 20 or 30 seconds.

He climbed to approximately 60 feet to assess the damage and check the controls, then flew directly back to home base and made a normal landing. Inspection of the aircraft revealed Bravo damage.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

What a sad way to bang up a perfectly good aircraft! Sure makes you wonder just what point he was tryin' to make in allowing a copilot with less than two hours in the aircraft to get into such a hopeless mess. The plane commander's statement, that "the accident could have been prevented if I had taken control at some earlier point in the approach," proves that he's just about as proficient in 20-20 hindsight as a lot of us.

Memo From Gramps

There's no doubt that the hairiest part of an aviator's life is the first couple of years out of Pensacola when he knows he's the world's hottest pilot, but he's not so sure that everybody else knows it. This is the youngster most likely to go outside his own performance envelope, but my experience shows the older types are apt to get downright foolish once in a while, too.

One heck of a lot of trust rides shotgun when you strap on that megabuck machine, but before you take command of it, you'd better take command of yourself. Those wild emotions and urges to flirt with the grim reaper haven't got any place in your flight and, if you think "that can't happen to me," watch out!

I ain't tryin' to take the tiger out of the tank, I'm just saying if you plan your flight well, you will use to good advantage all the time available. There's enough challenge and danger built right into this flying duty to satisfy any normal appetite for thrills.

If you want to be relieved on station by your son, you've gotta accept the responsibility of flying by the rules to survive by the rules.